

Football fans get onside with literacy programme

Glory and Dismay: The Story of Football is a free programme aimed at people interested in the beautiful game while improving their literacy skills.

The 20-week long initiative is run by Space @ The Broomhouse Hub and funded by One City Trust and provides opportunities to meet and interview various sports professionals. No topic will be off the table with workshops and open discussions on issues such as racism, sectarianism, homophobia and sexism in women's football.

At the end it is hoped that those taking part will have improved their reading, writing and communication skills, and that this will be evidenced in a publication of their work.

Glory and Dismay member John Maclean Abercrombie said: "I'd be lost if I didn't come along. I feel my reading and writing skills have improved since attending."

Member Michelle Roxburgh said: "I was struggling to read, but this class is so different because everyone is so passionate about football and I enjoy learning. People who know me say they can't believe how much I've changed. I'm more confident, which makes me want to do more, learn more."

Course leader Hazel Lyons, Training and Employability Project Worker at Space, said: "There are many people struggling with loneliness and poor mental health, and they can benefit from a

course like this. The important goal is improving literacy, but it is fun and engaging, as well.”

One in four Scottish adults may face challenges due to a lack of literacy skills. Glory and Dismay is designed to break that cycle. It is based on a project led by Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire who was imprisoned in the 1960s when his teaching methods were regarded as empowering the illiterate poor.

Freire found that as literacy became attainable, pessimism disappeared—a concept on which Glory and Dismay runs.

Hazel Lyons said: “The occasional joy and utter despair that entails from being a football fan, especially in Scotland.

“Our students express their identity through football, which has actually allowed them to build knowledge,” she added. “They have the desire to learn and being in a group like this takes away the fear.”

Previous visitors include Scottish author Sir Ian Rankin, former Hibernian striker Lawrie Reilly, former Heart of Midlothian players Gary Mackay, Andy Webster, and Derek Ferguson; former Scottish football manager Shelly Kerr, Homeless World Cup co-founder Mel Young, Scottish football referee Ian McGill and many more.

While football is not normally a game associated with academic excellence, this is a learning scheme that uses the sport to encourage literacy and numeracy. The classes are for people who have literacy and numeracy problems, yet have this incredible knowledge of football. We build on their existing knowledge and they acquire reading, writing, and digital skills along the way.

For more details of the course, contact Hazel Lyons via phone (07821 6401) or email (hazel.lyons@spacescot.org).



Glory and Dismay participants at Tynecastle



Hazel Lyons on the left with participants at Tynecastle



Hazel Lyons on left and participants at Tynecastle



H Lyons in the centre with participants at the certificate ceremony